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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 002277

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DEPT ALSO FOR AF/SPG, NEA/ELA
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SU](#) [EG](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: IN SUDAN, EGYPT PREFERS THE DEVIL IT KNOWS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 02157

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 01976

Classified By: P/E CHIEF E. WHITAKER, REASON: SECTIONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) In a September 16 meeting with Poloff, Egyptian DCM Osama Shaltout expressed his government's concern for Sudan's political stability in light of recent public unrest, the looming collision between the Sudanese government and the international community on Darfur, and the beheading of journalist Mohammed Taha (Ref A). Echoing comments made by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit earlier in the week, he said that the Government of Egypt (GoE) feared the erosion of the National Congress Party-dominated regime and the development of a "security vacuum" on its southern borders. He indicated that the alternative to the current regime would be less desirable to both the USG and the GoE and insinuated that incidents like the beheading of journalist Mohammed Taha, allegedly at the hands of Islamic extremists, could increase in frequency as the regime's strength declines.

[1](#)2. (C) Shaltout attributed Taha's assassination to the extremist group Takfir wal Hijra, and underscored the utility of the current Sudanese government by asking if there were any truth to reports that it had ceased to cooperate with the USG on counter-terrorism. Shaltout said that past fears of regime instability in Sudan had prompted Egyptian reconciliation efforts, despite links between the NCP and its predecessor, the National Islamic Front (NIF), to terrorist acts against the GoE--most notably the 1995 assassination attempt on President Hosni Mubarak. The implication was that the USG should adopt a similarly pragmatic approach based on its security interests and in an effort to find peace in Darfur.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Shaltout, the GoE is privately encouraging Sudan to accept UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1706 in order to forestall a collision with the international community, which would only yield to greater isolation and undermine the Sudanese government's ability to maintain order. He predicated that the Sudanese leadership would permit UN intervention within three months. Shaltout reacted positively to rumors of the imminent replacement of Foreign Minister Lam Akol, as it would shore up regime stability and open a more constructive dialogue with the international community. (Comment: Rumors of a cabinet re-shuffle are widespread in Khartoum, and the most often-mentioned replacement for Akol is Minister of Cabinet Affairs Deng Alor. End comment.)

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: Shaltout's analysis of the current situation in Sudan indicates the continued potential for prominent Arab buy-in to bring Sudan back from the brink (Ref B). Recent

Arab League support for a rejection of UNSCR 1706 may be due less to pan-Arab solidarity than to a desire to avoid undermining Sudan's current regime. Egyptian fears of a security vacuum on its southern border could be used to induce the GoE to exert more pressure on the Sudanese government to accept UN re-hatting in the interest of long-term stability. END COMMENT
HUME